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SUBJECT: USAID/DART OVERVIEW OF HAITI POST-EARTHQUAKE PROTECTION ISSUES

¶11. (U) Summary. In the post-earthquake period, affected populations confront significant risks, including potential exploitation, abuse, psychosocial distress, and gender-based violence. Limited information regarding the availability of humanitarian assistance exacerbates psychosocial distress, in particular. Protection agencies also highlight growing concern regarding children, particularly those living in orphanages or otherwise separated from families. Protection and gender are cross-cutting issues that organizations must address and mainstream into all programs funded by USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). In addition, in response to identified protection concerns in Haiti, USAID/OFDA is targeting vulnerable populations through support to the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other implementing partners for stand-alone protection activities. End Summary.

Protection Risks for the Earthquake-affected Population

¶12. (U) Recognizing significant protection concerns - defined as harm, exploitation, or abuse of affected populations - in the post-earthquake period, USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) deployed a protection advisor to Port-au-Prince on January 29. The USAID/DART Protection Advisor is working with the humanitarian community to identify and assess potential protection issues and recommend appropriate programmatic responses.

¶13. (U) Humanitarian organizations are working to address a number of identified protection-related issues in Haiti, including limited humanitarian assistance information, psychosocial distress, sexual and gender-based violence, and child protection. According to U.N. agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), adequate humanitarian information is crucial to alleviate the stress caused by the affected populations' inability to meet basic needs. Post-disaster, affected individuals should be informed of the availability, location, and method of receiving basic goods and services. To improve information sharing and general awareness of assistance, agencies participating in the Protection Cluster and sub-clusters for gender-based violence and child protection are devising strategies for messaging through radio and other means.

¶4. (SBU) According to the USAID/DART Protection Advisor, the anxiety associated with meeting basic survival needs compounds the stress caused by the earthquake - due to injury, loss of life, damaged or destroyed houses, and disruptions to livelihoods and daily routines. Multiple stress factors raise significant concerns for widespread psychosocial distress among the affected population. In addition, NGO partners have also noted the effects on the population of being unable to bury deceased family members with traditional ceremonies, as many remain unrecovered or have been buried in mass graves.

¶5. (SBU) Gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence, is of increasing concern for women and girls living in informal settlements, where a lack of secure and private shelter makes women particularly vulnerable. Illustrating these concerns, U.N. agencies and NGOs have reported several known cases of rape in camps, although data is not yet collected in an organized fashion. In particular, displaced women and girls have expressed concern about the risk of sexual violence when they bathe - either in the open or in shower facilities that lack adequate lighting or privacy. Congested conditions in camps present a significant challenge to humanitarian agencies establishing water and sanitation facilities. Little space is available in informal settlements to provide these facilities in accordance with best practices, whereby community members work with relief agencies to locate water and sanitation facilities in areas that maximize safety and privacy.

¶6. (U) Humanitarian organizations working in Haiti have highlighted child protection as a particular concern. The earthquake and ensuing confusion resulted in the separation of some children from their caregivers. These unaccompanied children require assistance in reuniting with caregivers, while other children will remain orphaned by the earthquake and require interim and long-term care arrangements. Although children are often naturally resilient, those who experienced injury, loss, and disruption of daily life require an early return to routine care, play, and education to promote recovery.

¶7. (U) Children living in orphanages are a particularly vulnerable population. In cooperation with the Government of Haiti (GoH) Office for Child Protection (IBERS), UNICEF is conducting assessments of GoH-registered orphanages in earthquake-affected areas. To date, UNICEF has completed assessments in approximately 220 orphanages. The USAID/DART Protection Advisor has also travelled to assess conditions in six orphanages in metropolitan Port-au-Prince, noting that each of the orphanages sustained structural damage, displacing caregivers and children to outside areas, even from buildings with minimal damage. Orphanages visited by the protection advisor also reported that usual support systems - typically funding from individual donors and churches - had been disrupted, leaving caregivers unable to procure the necessary food and water.

Responding to Protection Risks

¶8. (U) **Psychosocial Support:** Humanitarian best practices immediately following an emergency include efforts to increase access to basic services and provide information about assistance, as vital first steps in addressing an affected population's psychosocial distress. The USAID/DART is encouraging implementing partners to incorporate messaging into relief activities - informing affected individuals that assistance is available and explaining how to receive it. Furthermore, USAID partners mainstream protection as a cross-cutting issue into the design and

implementation of all programs. As a result, NGOs design health activities, shelter interventions, and water, sanitation, and hygiene programs to reduce risks to personal safety and involve communities and beneficiary populations in the decision-making process. Beyond basic service provision, USAID/OFDA-funded NGO partners continue to provide assistance to families and communities that encourage social interaction and development of positive coping mechanisms, particularly for children. USAID-supported NGOs Save the Children, Food for the Hungry (FH), and Project Concern International (PCI) are currently establishing "safe" or child-friendly spaces in spontaneous settlements and communities. These spaces are managed by trained community workers who facilitate play and monitor children for protection concerns, such as separation from family members.

¶19. (SBU) Sexual and Gender-based Violence: Protection mainstreaming is critical to minimizing risks for sexual and gender-based violence. USAID-funded partners implementing emergency food, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions continually seek ways to maximize safety for women and girls. This is particularly apparent in the design of settlements, organization of food distribution points, and placement of water points and latrines. As noted above, limited space in settlements reduces options for the placement of showers and latrines; however, NGOs are working with affected communities to provide adequate lighting and institute other safety measures. Partners distributing food assistance have reorganized the majority of sites to include a separate area within the perimeter for women to divide heavy bags into more manageable loads. In addition, USAID/OFDA has funded FH and PCI to establish women's centers in affected areas, providing women with a safe place to meet, socialize, and seek support, if needed. FH and PCI will also conduct campaigns to increase awareness of and sensitivities to gender-based violence, with the ultimate goal of reducing the number of incidents.

¶10. (U) Child Protection: USAID/OFDA partner Save the Children is currently developing a registration process for children separated from their families. In close coordination with UNICEF and the GoH, Save the Children will manage the database and facilitate family tracing and reunification. Save the Children is also training other NGOs to identify and register separated children that are encountered through other relief activities. UNICEF is working with the GoH to ensure that unaccompanied children are placed in appropriate interim care arrangements.

¶11. (U) Orphanages: During the two-week period of strong aftershocks, humanitarian agencies and many others raised concerns about children and staff living in earthquake-damaged orphanage buildings. As a result, structural engineers from the USAID/OFDA-funded search and rescue teams conducted assessments of multiple orphanages in metropolitan Port-au-Prince, notifying management of potential hazards. In addition, to meet immediate shelter needs of four orphanages in Port-au-Prince, USAID/OFDA has donated generators and 10 large weatherproof tents - complete with lighting systems. Each tent, previously used by U.S. urban search and rescue (USAR) teams during the earthquake response, is valued at approximately \$30,000. Other USAID/OFDA-donated items delivered by USAR teams included cots, sleeping bags, air mattresses, and bottled water.

¶12. (U) USAID/OFDA plans to provide additional support to orphanages with identified needs, in coordination with UNICEF and humanitarian partners. However, the USAID/DART Protection Advisor emphasizes that relief agencies must ensure that orphanages do not receive a disproportionate amount of support in comparison to the general earthquake-affected population. According to the advisor, disproportionate assistance may inadvertently encourage family separation and compel caregivers to put children in orphanages,

where a higher level of assistance is assumed. Therefore, USAID/OFDA will continue to balance assistance provided to vulnerable children in orphanages and those living with families in settlements and other earthquake-affected areas.

¶13. (U) To date, USAID/OFDA has provided nearly \$3.3 million to partners for stand-alone protection activities, such as child-friendly spaces and training on gender-based violence. The total does not include the value of the many protection benefits that stem from mainstreaming protection measures into the range of other humanitarian interventions.

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